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Margaret Atwood and Dystopian Novel

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Abstract

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Introduction

Before the appearance of the term “Dystopia” or “Anti-utopia”, other term – “Utopia” had emerged. Utopia is a Greek word that means *u* - (“not”) *topos* (“place”) or “no-place”. It can be found as early as in Plato’s works. Famous dialogue “The Republic”, written in 380 BC, discusses the issues such as the truth, law and legal state. Plato depicts the model of a utopian country, based on non – existence of private property, absolute equality and so on. Other examples of utopia can be found in the 16th century with Thomas More.

Since Thomas More’s “Utopia”, many utopian works have been created. Most of them are connected to the issues such as ideal community or society, equality, freedom and abolishment of private property.

A 16th century author, Francis Bacon, in his work “New Atlantis” shows the world where people believe that scientific and technological progress will improve people’s life. However, the reality revealed the opposite result: this progress turned Bacon’s utopia into dystopia or anti-utopia. Utopian dream did not come true. Along with the scientific and technological progress, people lost real relationships; they became amazingly mechanized and automatic. With scientific progress the environment has become extremely polluted and number of diseases has increased, child-bearing has considerably reduced. These changes have been reflected in literature. As a result, we got the opposite type of a new novel – a dystopian novel.

Jonathan Swift’s “Gulliver’s Travels” is considered one of the first dystopian novel. It combines utopian and dystopian elements. Dystopian elements can be found in a part of the novel that depicts Gulliver’s travel to the Lilliputian kingdom. This is the kingdom where high positions in the government are staffed with the best rope dancers and a cause of the war is difference in their attitudes concerning the proper way to crack eggs. It is a bitter satire, that shows the reader how silly and absurd the reasons of the wars were that took thousands of lives.

Early dystopian novels are characterized by comparatively less dystopian elements. For example, Thomas More’s “Utopia” and Jonathan Swift’s “Gulliver’s Travels.” However, later, dystopian novels became completely built on dystopian elements. Among these novels are

George Orwell's "1984", Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World", Ray Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451", Margaret Atwood's "Handmaid's Tale", Margaret Atwood's "Oryx and Crake".

Dystopian genre has become quite common in modern literature. It has already attracted critics' attention. Numerous critical works and articles are dedicated to the study of this genre nowadays. By 1900, about 400 dystopian literary works had been created in English language and thousands of them in other languages.

Margaret Atwood, a Canadian author and literary critic, makes great contribution to the developments of the dystopian genre. In her novels, she has highlighted political, social and class problems.

The purpose of the work is to study the main characteristics of dystopian genre, to research dystopian novels from religious and political point of view based on Margaret Atwood's novels. Furthermore, to compare Atwood's works with the dystopian novels of different times (George Orwell's "1984", Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World", Ray Bradbury's "Fahrenheit 451") in order to reveal similarities and differences.

Considering the purpose, mentioned above, the objectives of the work are the following:

- a) Study of the origins and stages of development of a dystopian novel;
- b) Research of the main characteristics and features of a dystopian novel;
- c) Analysis of religious themes in Margaret Atwood's works, such as religious rituals, God-figures and Biblical allusions, comparing to the dystopian novels of George Orwell, Aldous Huxley and Ray Bradbury.
- d) Study of political dystopia in Margaret Atwood's novels, in particular, totalitarian government, anti-intellectualism, comparing with the dystopian novels of George Orwell, Aldous Huxley and Ray Bradbury.
- e) Reveal the novelty of Atwood's works, in a development of dystopian novel.

The work consists of introduction, four chapters, conclusion, and bibliography and is supplied with annex of illustrations.

Chapter 1 – gives general reference of dystopian genre, analyzes its general characteristics and the history of dystopian genre development. The chapter presents critics' attitudes and discussion of the role of dystopian genre in modern literary history.

Chapter 2 - analyzes works of contemporary writer Margaret Atwood and her role in the development of dystopian genre.

Chapter 3 - studies religious themes in Margaret Atwood's works. Religious rituals, the god-figures and biblical allusions are depicted in comparison with the dystopian novels of George Orwell, Aldous Huxley and Ray Bradbury.

Chapter 4 - The main theme of the chapter is political dystopia that is analyzed based on the parallels with works of Margaret Atwood, George Orwell, Aldous Huxley and Ray Bradbury. The concepts of totalitarian government and anti-intellectualism are discussed.

Methods of the research – comparative method is used in the dissertation. Despite a great number of authors discussed in the work and comparative analysis of their novels, also their original and sometimes inimitable vision is of great importance. The authors in this work are selected with the principle of discussing the issue in-depth, developing and varying the subject. Descriptive method is also used in the dissertation, as by describing several kinds of rituals, characters and history in the novel highlights differences and similarities among them.

Topicality – The topicality of the work is revealed in growing interest towards dystopian genre in modern literature. Many other genres aspire to the similarity to dystopian novel, as modern reality gives such opportunities. This genre has already attracted attention of numerous critics. Canadian writer Margaret Atwood, whose novels are analyzed in our work, has made interesting contribution to the development of the genre. In our opinion, the study of her novels in comparison with the dystopian works of different periods will be the issue of great interest and what is more important, the problems presented in the works of this genre are closely connected with the global issues of the modern world and suggest their artistic-aesthetical solution. Accordingly, in the process of the development of human perception and self-consciousness, dystopian novel has moral-educational function. In

addition, dystopian genre is less studied and analyzed in the Georgian literature and we consider it important to involve Georgian researchers in this process.

Chapter 1

Dystopian Novel

One of the first uses of dystopia can be found in a speech of a famous philosopher John Stuart Mills, that was delivered in English Parliament in 1868, where he criticized the government and politics of Ireland:

“It is, perhaps too complimentary to call them Utopians, they ought rather to be called dys-topians, or caco-topians. What is commonly called Utopian is something too good to be practicable; but what they appear to favor is too bad to be practicable” (Mill, 1868).

In dystopian works, analyzed by us, specific features of dystopian novels have been revealed. These features are the following: previous history, character, conflict and climax/culmination. They make dystopian novels, since they are characteristic only of this genre. The previous history is mainly the period of long-lasting wars, marked with the use of biological weapons that has led the world to dystopia. Main characters in dystopian novels are rebels, protagonists who fight against dystopian government. The culmination takes place when the protagonist is captured by the authority and either he escapes or is tortured and killed by the government.

In addition to the features mentioned above, dystopian novels have numerous characteristics in common. In these novels people are under permanent control, nominal ruler or certain concept is idolized, society adjusts its points of view according to the commonly accepted rules and norms, dystopian government makes the illusion of utopian society where everyone is equal, there is no crime and people are happy.

We witness the events, predicted by the author half -century ago, in modern reality. Along with the technical advancement, humans are becoming dependent on these advanced machines, human relationship is becoming less important, majority of production is made by means of genetic engineering and scientists cannot predict what the results will be in the future. It is a well-known fact that government has access to any kind of information and is able to control every single step people make. Childlessness has become a deep problem in medicine, while reproductive experiments have achieved remarkably successful results. And all of this was depicted and written a long time ago. Dystopia is almost reality in modern world, so we are unable to ignore the popularity of the genre.

Chapter 2

Margaret Atwood- from Reality to Dystopia

Canadian writer, literary critic and poet Margaret Atwood is such a many-faceted author that it is difficult to frame her works or assign to a certain genre, but she is particularly known for dystopian novels: "The Edible Woman" (1969), "The Handmaid's Tale" (1985), "The Robber Bride" (1994), "Alias Grace" (1996). The more recent work - „MaddAddam“ (2013) is a part of trilogy started with „Oryx and Crake“ and continued with „The Year of the Blood“ (2009). Her novel "Survival" (1972) is considered the masterpiece of Canadian literature. The last published novels are: "Stone Mattress" (2014), and "The Heart Goes First" (2015). The themes of these novels are women and their problems in society, alienation in relationships with their husbands and with the whole society. Atwood's female characters are courageous, they pursue for freedom and try to find their place in restrictive, male-dominated society. As for the male characters, they are mainly depicted as oppressors, playing negative roles in marriages, in women's professional development. For instance, in her novel "Cat's Eye", she depicts female characters who are artists and the men's cynical, doubtful attitude towards their art. In this novel art is represented as a tool against tyranny. Atwood's non-dystopian works often depict collapse in families and displays a profound awareness that gender problems still persist in modern society and will become more severe in the future. The

writer discusses this problem in her dystopian novels and the representation of women protagonists and their problems in the dystopian world can be considered as Margaret Atwood's specific novelty in the development of the dystopian genre.

Margaret Atwood makes great contribution to the development of dystopian genre. She highlights problems of gender, politics, social division and many others. Unlike other dystopian works, in Atwood's novels the society is often divided into different classes. On the contrary, most dystopian novels depict one society, crowd, that is governed by a totalitarian government. For instance, in her novel "The Handmaid's Tale", Atwood displays the society with 6 legal classes of women. Although, female characters are much more in Atwood's novels than male ones, she never defines herself as feminist writer and says this label should be applied to the writers working inside the narrowing framework of feministic ideology.

While being better-known as a novelist, Margaret Atwood is also an author of interesting essays, fairy-tales and poems. Deep sorrow, expressiveness and intellect are prominent in her works.

Chapter 3

Dystopia and Religion in Margaret Atwood's Novels

Almost all dystopian novels, studied in this work, have one and the same origin. After long-lasting wars a new kind of society emerges, and the aim of this society is to create the ideal world with universal happiness. As a result, all the public institutes adjust to the new system of this absolute happiness. Religious institute is not an exception and it, too, undergoes series of changes. Authors of dystopian genre depict these events in their works.

It seems dystopian novels should have had less connections to religion, but in fact the majority of them are not godless. It represents either god with a changed image, or a totalitarian government comfortably plays the role of the god. Actually, god always exists in various forms.

In some dystopian novels religion reaches the level of fanaticism. These novels display deeply religious societies. Of course, religion serves the interests of governing class as they understand, that religion makes it much easier to control people. In this type of dystopia there is a new, thematic kind of religion, government figures who play the role of god-men, commonly called “surrogate gods” by some critics. We come across new kinds of sins, heresy and odd religious beliefs. In Aldous Huxley’s “Brave New World” and Margaret Atwood’s “The Handmaid’s Tale” we can find examples of new, fictional religions, purifying rituals that are conducted unconsciously.

In the dystopian novels, analyzed in this work, we have highlighted three main themes that we consider as the best representations of the concept of religion in dystopian novels. These themes are: surrogate gods, religious rituals and biblical allusions or metaphors.

All the dystopian novels studied here have surrogate gods, who are the representations of the main principles and goals of the authority. For example, in “1984” god is “power as an end”, in “Brave New World”, it is “community, solidarity, stability”. Therefore, god is not a minor figure in dystopian novels. On the contrary, it is the central figure. In other words, a dystopian god creates a dystopian novel.

“Dystopian God-figures are necessary for stability and sense of direction in an otherwise irrational society... so long as god or Big Brother controls the world men cling to the hope that meaning and coherence must exist” (Weinkauff, 1971:3).

Almost all dystopian novels, analyzed here, reveal how the totalitarian, dystopian god replaces the god “as love”. In the Bible, the god is the representation of unlimited power, but at the same time, it is hope, love and peace, while dystopian god is the power that does not create but destroy, it is not love but hatred, not peace but terror.

“Qualities such as mercy and compassion are unheard of...and unmerited favour and love in the theological sense...non-existent. Interested only in the superficial well-being of society, the god-figure expects love, loyalty and ritualized worship and....sends men to their deaths arbitrarily.”(Weinkauff, 1971 : 4).

In Margaret Atwood's novel „Oryx and Crake“, there is an odd institute of surrogate gods. Religion is denied like other dystopian novels and none of the characters can be considered religious. While those, others, people of another world, who are members of different religious organizations, are considered the lowest class that is threat, as they are infected. Human beings do not have a reason to be moral. They can create animals for entertainment:

“There'd been a lot of fooling around in those days: create an animal was so much fun, said the guys doing it; it made you feel like God” (Atwood, 2003: 51).

Literary critic Rhona Trauvitch makes the comparison between the creation of the new world in “Oryx and Crake” and Biblical genesis. In the Bible God creates everything from nothing, in “Oryx and Crake” everything is created by the scientist with the method of genetic engineering. All the flowers and plants that are made with Botanical Transgenics by the students are very colorful:

“A whole array of drought-and-food-resistant tropical blends, with flowers or leaves in lurid shade of chrome yellow and brilliant flame red and phosphorescent blue and neon purple” (Atwood, 2004:199).

This is a case when each human can imagine himself being the god every student, every scientist , while in George Orwell's “1984” the specific god exists. In the first scene of the novel, the main character Winston Smith watches a “two minute hate” program. Its subject is Emmanuel Goldstein, depicted as the principle enemy of the party, who has written “The Theory and Practice of Oligarchical Collectivism”. Suddenly his face on television screen is replaced by the image of “Big Brother” who has a face of Christ and a praying begins B...B.....B.....B. Everybody feels a relief.

Obviously, the party is a religion and “big brother” is the god. O'Brien reveals the true essence of the party with the words:

„What was required in a party member was an outlook similar to that of the ancient Hebrew who knew, without knowing much else, that all nations other than his worshipped “false gods”. He did not need to know that these gods were called Baal, Osiris, Moloch,

Ashtaroht and the like; probably the less he knew about them, the better for his orthodoxy. He knew Jehovah and commandments of Jehovah; he knew, therefore, that all gods with other names or other attributes were false gods.” (Orwell, 1989:251)

Christianity has a form of socio-political institute, that acts as the party and all the other religions and gods except the party are false gods.

In Margaret Atwood’s novel “The Handmaid’s Tale”, there are probably one of the best examples of religion that is adjusted to the regime, the different interpretation of Christianity and the creation of new religion similar to a sect. However, it is the only dystopian world that worships the Christian god.

The novel is almost entirely built on biblical allusions. From the very beginning we find out that in the Republic of Gilead reproduction rates are dangerously low due to nuclear explosions, use of bio-weapons and leakage of toxic substances, as well as uncontrolled use of insecticides and herbicides.

In searching the solution to the problem, the government reconstructs the society and divides it into classes. Young, fertile women are trained as “handmaids” at “Rachel and Leah Re-education Center”, to bear children for elite people, the so called “Commanders”. Both of the names mentioned are from the Bible, from the story of Bilhah and Rachel (Genesis, 30:1-6):

„Give me children or else I die. Am I in god’s stead who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb. Behold my maid Bilhah, she will bear upon my knees that I may have children by her.” (Genesis, 30:1).

The word “handmaid” is also a biblical allusion from the Old Testament. The main Character Offred says they are “handmaids” and wives of their “commanders” can beat them, only with their hands.

„Your slave is in your hands”, Abram said. “Do whatever you think is best”. Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.” (Genesis, 16:6).

It appears that the “Red Center of Rachel and Leah” serves the country. The “aunts” there psychologically indoctrinate “handmaids” by telling them that they are the sacred vessels; that their mission is holy; that not all of them will be able to cope with it; that some will fall on rocks and thorns while others will end up in fertile soil. Here again Biblical allusion from The New Testament in Gospel according to Mark (Mark, 8:16).

The country itself is called “Gilead”. The word also comes from the Bible. In the Old Testament, the country of Gilead is mentioned and depicted as a rich and fertile area on the eastern bank of the Jordan River. The name is the direct reference that the country tries to create an illusion of being prosperous and untroubled and the dystopian kingdom that has less in common with the biblical wealthy land, is called “Gilead” from which all the valuable things came from, for example balm and oil:

“Judah and Israel traded with you; they exchanged wheat from Minnith and confections, honey, olive oil and balm for you wares” (Ezekiel, 27:17).

In the novel, there are many interesting rituals through which the government is trying to create a global point of view and frame the society in one space where different opinions or attitudes simply do not exist. To reach this goal they use religious ecstasy, in which society takes part in a specific ritual created by the authority. These may be the rituals of hatred, stoning to death of a criminal, birth giving ritual and so on. According to the examples given below, it is obvious that the result is achieved and society is changed into a mindless mass of easily controllable crowd.

For instance, the scene where Jenin is giving birth to a child, in “The Handmaid’s Tale”, is depicted as a ritual attended by all the handmaids and “aunts”, encouraging her with shouts. The aim is to orient all handmaids to their holy mission – childbirth. The ecstasy is so powerful that milk leaks from their breasts.

“Breathe, breathe, we chant, as we have been taught. Hold, hold. Expel, expel, expel. We chant to the count of five. Five in, hold for five, out for five. Janine her eyes closed, tries to slow her breathing”. (Atwood, 1998: 155).

The most terrifying ritual in “Handmaids tale” is the ritual of stoning and it is called purgatory, where political criminal is encouraged to be stoned. The psychology of crowd is so strong that even the protagonist Offred is inspired to do this. She is so excited by the shouts and screams that she does not know what she is doing. Ecstasy is achieved:

„The air is bright with adrenaline, we’re permitted anything and this is freedom... Now there are sounds, gasps, a low noise like growling, yells, and the red bodies tumble forward and I can no longer see, he’s obscured by arms, fists, feet. A high scream comes from somewhere, like a horse in terror. He has become an it” (Atwood, 1998:369).

The ritual like this can be found in Aldous H Huxley’s “Brave New World”, where worship to god is replaced with worship to “Ford”. This is a ritual similar to Eucharist where sanctified bread is replaced by the dedicated pills of soma hallucinogen, “the perfect drug”. To the accompaniment of music and gospels, people experience confluence of “ford” in their being.

“The president made another sign of the T and sat down. The service had begun. The dedicated soma tablets were placed in the center of the table. The loving cup of strawberry ice-cream soma was passed from hand to hand and, with the formula, “I drink to my annihilation,” twelve times quaffed. Then to the accompaniment of the synthetic orchestra The First Solidarity Hymn was sung.

“Ford, we are twelve; oh make us one,

Like drops within the Social River,

Oh, make us now together run,

As swiftly, as thy shinning flivver.” (Bradbury, 2012:82)”

The episode is similar to the Christ and twelve apostles’ scene of Eucharist, of course adjusted to the soma-stupefied society.

We can find a ritual, similar to the religious one, in Margaret Atwood's novel "Oryx and Crake". Communication with a snowman leads them to the ceremony of worship like a religious ritual. During the period of the snowman's absence for a long time, they create the picture of it and when the snowman comes back they say:

„We made a picture of you, to help us send out our voices to you". (Atwood, 2012:61)

Here snowman remembers Crake's doubt about the threat that he thinks will emerge when his creations start looking for something, worship of something, seeing symbols. In concept of threat he means free thinking, that will eventually end their perfect and happy life:

"Watch out for art...as soon as they start doing art, we are in trouble. Symbolic thinking of any kind would signal downfall in crake's view. Next they'd be inventing idols and funerals, and grave goods, and the afterlife, and sin.....and kings, and then slavery and war" (Atwood 2012:361).

The country of Gilead uses the Bible as a guarantee of state stability. In addition, the biblical language serves as a guarantee of stability as well by using it as an everyday language of communication. For instance, common greeting for handmaids are the phrases: "Blessed be the fruit", "May the Lord open"; police officers in Gilead are called "Guardians of the faith" and even shops have names inspired by the Bible: "Lilies of the field", "Milk and honey", "all flesh". Military forces have names like "The angels of the apocalypse, Fourth division", and "the twenty-first battalion of the angels of light". Names copied invariably from the Bible cannot be found in any other dystopian novels except Atwood's "Handmaid's Tale" and it seems the function of its use is to justify the extreme severity and cruelty of the government.

Biblical allusions and symbols (not names, unlike the examples presented above) can be found in Ray Bradbury's novel "Fahrenheit 451", where professor Faber identifies himself with water and Montag - with fire and states their confluence creates wine. This is also a biblical allusion to the miracle of Cana, when Jesus turns water into wine.

Also it is significant that water wine and fire have the whole reflection in the ritual of sacrament : water and wine, which represent Christ's blood is the destructive fire if it is got

wrongly. Fire can warm us, but also can destroy us. As fire brigades destroy books in “Fahrenheit 451”.

The examples analyzed above have revealed that religion in dystopian novels is a tool used for control and subordination of masses. It is not Christianity, Islam, Buddhism or any other religions, but a new, changed and transformed state system, that achieves its goals quite effectively. Religious rituals, surrogate gods and biblical allusions can be found in almost all the novels studied by us. As the analysis revealed, Margaret Atwood’s works have made new contributions to the main theme of dystopian novels - religion and the society left without god. In Atwood’s works this theme is highlighted more in connection with female characters. For Atwood, it is the object of interest, how women are affected by religious manipulations like these and how the strict authority of men controls them. On the other hand, in her “Oryx and Crake”, Atwood depicts the world that is under control of insane scientists. They are surrogate gods, who create and destroy. Therefore, Atwood’s novels give a new direction of the theme of religion in dystopian novels.

Chapter 4

Political Dystopia and Margaret Atwood’s Novels

Dystopian literature is very popular today, as many critical essays and articles are written about this genre. Its popularity is due to the fact that the problems that this genre depicts are very close to the society we are living in: lack of freedom, overpopulation, government’s constant control, advanced technology and the lack of personal, real communication among people. Joseph Adams describes the dystopian society as the society that is controlled by the most repressive and totalitarian government:

„In a dystopian story, society itself is typically antagonist; it is actively working against the protagonist’s aims and desires. This oppression is frequently enacted by a totalitarian or authoritarian government, resulting in the loss of civil liberties and untenable living

conditions, caused by any number of circumstances, such as world overpopulation, laws controlling a person's sexual or reproductive freedom, and living under constant surveillance"(Adams, 2011).

Dystopian literature is the prediction about the universe that is very close to us and we must not make it come true. Dystopian government is the central theme in every dystopian novel, inasmuch as the most of the dystopian novels were inspired by the government's activities.

Literature critic Rebecca Gottlieb defines the importance of politics in dystopian novels and highlights the role of a government in creating the dystopian world. In fact, the government creates the dystopian world:

"Dystopia, whatever form it may take, is driven by a political engine. That is, the power of dystopia is that it takes real social problems and represents them pushed to an extreme as a tool to demonstrate the horror that would occur if current problems became writ large. It is a literary genre that examines oppression – that is: de-individuation, mind control, deprivation, lack of choice, lack of access to power, lack of access to resources, and so on" (Gottlieb, 2001:2).

Like other members of society, authors are involved in political situations; their literature more or less contains political elements. In many cases, dystopian novels were the protest against the government, against wars and slavery, against the mind control. For example, George Orwell's "1984" was inspired by the Soviet Union. The political situation that is depicted in Margaret Atwood's "Handmaid's Tale" is connected with Hitler and Nazis government. Olive Senior in his article "Literature is political, because we are political animals", says:

„We are all enmeshed in politics because we are all citizens of somewhere – even writers - and we cannot escape being shaped by political decisions, big and small. So instead of asking the question "should literature be political?" I would rephrase the statement: literature is political, because we, the creators of literature are political animals; it is part of accepting our responsibility of being human, of being citizens of the world" (Senior, 2013:1).

We discuss the politics in our paper work as the activity that government does in the country. In the case of politics, in dystopian novels we discuss two main themes, as we think they identify the character of political dystopia:

1. Totalitarian government
2. Anti- intellectualism

Political dystopia occurs when any type of political party, organization or ideology takes over. This also happens when an extreme religious organization controls the country. Political dystopia shows that in the future government will control every part of person's life. Heads of the government are "god-figures"; they have the mask of religion to control the country and to control the thoughts of people. This tyranny copes with everything very effectively. That is why a dystopian government is always a totalitarian government. Totalitarian government in dystopia works with many different units. In George Orwell's "1984", we have different ministries that solve different problems:

„Their names in Newspeak: Minitrue, Minipax, Miniluv, Miniplenty”(Orwell, 1989:15)

Government works like this: one thing happens, but we must believe that another thing happens. People vanish, written records are destroyed, facts are ignored from the memory, but we must believe that:

“War is peace,

Freedom is slavery,

Ignorance is strength” (Orwell, 1989:15).

The government works very quietly. An outsider cannot see anything strange at a first glance. Everyone is happy; the government looks like the preacher who is very helpful and preaches about what is good and what is bad. He preaches about the kind affairs that the government does and that is why everyone must adore it. He tries not to show any violence in public. Therefore, the government does every arrestment and punishment at night. They do not want to have the image of tyranny. They want to look like “the god-figures”:

„It was always at night – the arrests invariably happened at night. The sudden jerk out of sleep. The rough hand is shaking your shoulder, the lights glaring in your eyes, the ring of hard faces round the bed. In the vast majority of cases, there was no trial, no report of the arrest. People simply disappeared, always during the night. Your name was removed from the registers, every record of everything you had ever done was wiped out, your one – time existence was denied and then forgotten, you were abolished, annihilated: Vaporized was the usual word” (Orwell 1989:32).

Dystopian government gains the perfect control with several mechanisms. One of the most effective mechanisms is religion, as the power in the hands of government. This religion is transformed and changed as it is suitable for the government. In “Handmaid’s Tale” Margaret Atwood talks about the government which is extremely religious and which uses religious rituals, prayers and even the Bible to control the population, even the titles are from the Bible: Handmaids, Aunts, Marthas, Galahad, Bilhah, “Lilies of the field”, “Milk and honey” “all flesh” and so on. The Government uses the Biblical admonitions to make the handmaids believe that they are pure vessels and they are blessed:

„And so on and so forth. We had it read to us every breakfast. Blessed be this, blessed be that. They played it from a tape, so not even an Aunt would be guilty of the sin of reading. The voice of a man’s. Blessed be the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed be the merciful. Blessed be the meek. Blessed are the silent. Blessed be those that mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Atwood, 1998:28).

Biblical admonition “Woman shall be saved in childbearing” in “Handmaid’s Tale” is transformed like this: „woman shall be saved by childbearing”. When the government sees the danger in any prayer or admonition, they change it immediately. Members of a dystopian society believe that they obey not the government, but the god; they do not realize that this is fit for the government. this powerful tool is so flexible that the population looks like fanatics, they can kill somebody, they can commit suicide for this false religion, only small amount of people, protagonists, feel that something is wrong about this religion. In “Fahrenheit 451” Faber is the protagonist who knows that the government is a liar and they have changed many things:

„It's been a long time. I'm not a religious man. But It's been a long time. Faber turned the pages. It's as good as I remember. Lord, how they have changed it – in our “parlours” these days. Christ is one of the “family” now. I often wonder if God recognizes his own son the way we've dressed him up, or is it dressed from down?” (Bradbury, 2012:37).

In “Handmaid's Tale”, true religion is kept and now one can see it, people are even banned to read the Bible and some characters identify this device:

„The commander's Bible is kept locked up, the way people once kept tea locked up, so the servants wouldn't steal it. It is an incendiary device” (Atwood, 1998:89)

Another mechanism to control the people for dystopian government is drugs. In “Brave New World “Aldous Huxley talks about Soma that is an ideal medicine if you want to feel always happy, if you want to forget everything and if you want to die young. In the book we see the society, studded with Soma, they cannot think about anything, cannot judge anything. This is the perfect society for the dystopian government, as they are very easy to control.

In “Brave New World “ we also see a very interesting method to make people identical to one another. This is “Hypnopedia” – teaching is sleeping. As the human's mind is a blank board, they can write on them what they want, from their birth. Babies hear the same sounds, the same music, the same ideas every day. Their mind is full of this information, you cannot add anything, you cannot change anything, they are the same – one. We see the government as a very big laboratory, where they create humans, but not individuals. The government seeds stability without individuality. They know that stability is achieved when people think and look identically. They know that stability means robots and not individuals, and they have done this – they have many identical robots in the brave new world. This is the new world where the government controls the people's emotions. This is the world where the government is creating numerous identical twins from the same ovule. This is very simple and fast:

„Eight minutes of hard X-rays being as much as an egg can stand. A few died; of the rest, the least susceptible divided into two; most put out four buds; some eight; all were returned to the incubators, where the buds began to develop; then, after two days, were suddenly chilled,

chilled and checked. Two, four, eight, the buds in their turn budded; and having budded were dosed almost to death with alcohol; consequently burgeoned again and having budded-bud out of bud out of bud – were thereafter- further arrest being generally fatal-left to develop in peace. By which time the original egg was in a fair way to becoming anything from eight to ninety-six embryos – a prodigious improvement, you will agree, on nature.”(Huxley, 2013:18).

Soma in “Handmaids Tale” is again constant teaching of changed and transformed Bible. The main characters also talk about drugs and a lot of painkillers that are given to handmaids for the first time, as it was very easy for the government to make them obedient:

“Like Huxley’s creation of a drug-claimed society Atwood’s characters awaiting execution appear tranquilized by shots or pills. Like Huxley’s engineered reproduction Atwood’s fictional Gilead depends on the allotment of enslaved baby-makers as a means of assuring the birth of white children to repopulate a declining Caucasian nation” (Halabu, 2007: 19).

The authors of dystopian novels predict that this will be the incurable disease for the future world. They say that people all over the world will be infected with this disease and it will be the most powerful weapon for the government to control people. We cannot escape from this fact – it is a very advanced technology. In most dystopian novels, we see that technology is gradually changing people. They can do everything. They can teach, they can reproduce people, they can make food and the most important they can control people. There are screens and microphones everywhere in dystopian universe. They are the best spies. People live in the houses with screens instead of walls and they are addicted to these screens. Government controls everything with this technology. In “1984” there are hidden screens everywhere, there are screens in every house, and they control every movement of people, even every unusual thought. Government knows everything. In “Brave New World”, the screen covers the houses. Montag’s wife is so addicted to this technology that she is not logical any more; enormous screens in the house surround her. With small microphones in her ears, she cannot think and speak about other things, she is spelled with the same synthetic music and the ocean noses. Montag cannot communicate with her. She is not a sociable person any more:

„Without turning on the light he imagined how this room would like. His wife stretched on the bed, uncovered and cold, like a body displayed on the lid of a tomb, her eyes fixed to the ceiling by invisible threads of steel, immovable. And in her ears the little Seashells, the thimble radios tamped tight, and an electronic ocean of sound, of music and talk and music and talk coming in, coming in on the shore of her unsleeping mind. The room was indeed empty. Every night waves came in and bore her off on their great tides of sound, floating her, wide – eyed, toward morning. There had been no night in the last two years that Mildred had not swum that sea, had not gladly gone down in it for the third time.”(10)

People are afraid of hidden screens and microphones in dystopian universe. They do not trust one another. They feel that someone is watching them all the time, Big Brother is watching them, but Big Brother has the eyes of the Christ, so he must be very kind. Government must be very kind, they should believe.

However, we have a completely different situation in “Handmaid’s Tale”. In the novel, technology seems to have reversed. Gilead is not an advanced technological dystopia. We cannot see any screens, microphones and technologically elaborated machines in Gilead. The government has a very big problem of birth declining and they even do not use reproduction methods. They do not have laboratories and medicines to improve birth rate as we have in “Brave New World” and in “Fahrenheit 451”. On the other hand, Margaret Atwood’s second novel “Oryx and Crake” depicts the opposite: big laboratories, genetically modified organisms, pharmaceutical companies and organic farms. Technology in this novel is the threat and curse to the humankind as it brings the universe to the end. Technology brings the universe to apocalypse:

“The technology and science that came to rescue Homo sapiens from becoming extinct, themselves became the ultimate reason for human beings to become extinct in the novel. Technology could be a boon when handled positively and the same could become a curse when mishandled and cause devastating effects. In the novel “Oryx and crake” Margaret Atwood shows how the pharmaceutical companies have misled and mishandled technology creating a complete catastrophe, and they have ultimately paved the way for the impending apocalypse” (Priyavarshini, 2017:2).

In the Organic farms crazy scientists make human organs and tissues in animals' body and this genetically modified brain makes them dangerously clever. The British writer and literary critic Natasha Walter talks about "Oryx and Crake" and says that we must not trust the scientists, as they are sometimes very dangerous:

"In Oryx and Crake Atwood is putting across a relevant and intelligent political message, which can easily be summed up: don't trust the scientists and the big corporations to run the world" (Walter, 2003:2).

For Margaret Atwood these two extremes, on one hand the universe without technology and on the other hand, the universe with very advanced technology create the dystopia, in case they are used incorrectly.

Dystopian totalitarian government does not want people with high education, as they can have many questions and see what happens in the future. Educated people will be difficult to control, that is why the government is striving to form and govern an anti- intellectual society.

In Orwell's "1984" the system, through which the government gains anti-intellectualism, is "newspeak". It is the system, a new language, that contains words and phrases that make it impossible to think differently or to think of a different idea unacceptable for the government. If it exists in the mind, it will be impossible to express it. In fact, this is the control of minds:

„The purpose of newspeak was not only to provide a medium of expression for the world-view and mental habits proper to the devotees of *Ingsoc*, but to make all other modes of thought impossible. It was intended that when Newspeak had been adopted once and for all and *Oldspeak* forgotten, a heretical thought - that is a thought diverging from the principles of *Ingsoc* - should be literary unthinkable, at least so far as thought is dependent on words" (Orwell 1989:373).

Margaret Atwood also creates this kind of language, that functions identically, but in this case, religion is used to influence over people. Religious prayers, biblical phrases are used to make people think and act like the government wishes. At the beginning of the book, we

see “the red center”. It is some kind of educational institute, but they do not teach anything, except the monologs of Aunts, where they speak about the spirit of the soul, humility, about the advantages of being handmaids and their pure mission to save the world, to reproduce. Besides this, handmaids are even banned to read and write:

„Who knows what we’d make of it (the Bible), if we ever got our hands on it? We can be read to from it, by him, but we cannot read”. (Atwood 2008:127).

Every character in the dystopian society feels that they are the slaves of the language. They have no competence in language to express what they feel. Sometimes they feel like different, but they do not know how to say this, they even do not know what it is. The system is already in their mind, very deeply and they cannot escape from this new language. In “Handmaid’s Tale“, O’ Fred wants to know something, something different, but she does not know what it is:

„What would you like”? He says still with that lightness, as if it is a money transaction merely, and a minor one at that: candy, cigarettes.

” Besides hand lotion, you mean” I say.

“Besides hand lotion” he agrees.

“I would like.....” I say. “I would like to know”. It sounds indecisive, stupid even. I say it without thinking.

“Know what”? He says.

“Whatever there is to know” I say. (Atwood 2008:230).

The government uses language in order to limit the ideas, to limit any kind of different opinions. The screens in “Fahrenheit 451” get this effect, where we have the houses, which have big screens, instead of walls and the same program every day, where people hold meaningless dialogues and everyone in the society is addicted to these programs. They speak and act like the people in this program, talk about nothing, laugh about nothing; they do not worry and think that they are very happy. So the main goal is achieved: people think and act,

as they are one. Government knows that books are very dangerous for this universal happiness, because reading means thinking. You must not think in the dystopian society, you must be happy:

„So now do you see why books are hated and feared? They show the pores in the face of life. The comfortable people want only wax moon faces, poreless, hairless, and expressionless. We are living in a time when flowers are trying to live on flowers, instead of growing on good rain and black loam. Even fireworks, for all their prettiness come from the chemistry of the earth” (Bradbury 2012:79).

So, education is ignored in dystopian universe. It is very symbolic that the place where, there is Harvard University is now the prison in Gilead in Margaret Atwood’s “Handmaid’s Tale “, which is controlled by the secret police “Eye” and the walls which surround Harvard University are used to hang the bodies of traitors. This is the symbol of the changed universe. As the place where students get education has become the place of suffer and violence. It is the ignorance of all the concepts that students get to know at universities.

They do not have universities in Gilead, but they have special centres, where they work to change and transform everything that is dangerous for totalitarian government. In the “Red Centre” maids have everyday lessons. Aunts try to vanish every single memory from their heads that are connected with their old lives. They use the re-identification method. They change their names, their thoughts, and their individuality. For the next generation, it will be easier, maids will not need everyday teaching. Everything that was before Gilead will disappear, as Aunt Lidia says:

„You are the transition generation, said aunt Lydia. It is the hardest for you. We know the sacrifices you are being expected to make. It is hard when men revile you. For the ones who come after you, it will be easier. They will accept their duties with willing hearts. She did not say: Because they will have no memories, of any other way. (Atwood 2008:127).

In dystopian novels, government certainly uses other means as well to succeed in achieving the goals such as many kinds of punishment, imprisonment, torture and spy institutes. However, the above mentioned mental methods are the most successful, because

with these methods government does not need too much effort to control people. They are just the same, they do not need to be checked because mental control means the control of individuality.

Dystopian government is the totalitarian government that works very tellingly. They make the society as a very automatic system to operate. Among many ways, the most useful for them is the religion, as the power, as a very painless method to control, because they say that they do not want this – the God wants this. Drugs and technology are the second powerful weapon, because they make people addicted, like robots, with the same thoughts, with the same opinions, even with the same appearance. By these mechanisms, they make the illusion of perfect happiness, stability, equality and solidarity. In fact, reality is the opposite. Dystopian authors predict, that in the future there will be no individuality, no religion, no equality and solidarity. Unfortunately, the authors of dystopian novels predict that dystopian society is an anti-intellectual totalitarian society.

Conclusion

Dystopian genre represents problems existing in the real world that might lead us to fatal consequences. These problems emerge in all spheres of our society – political, social, economic, religious, feministic, etc.

Around 400 dystopian novels had been created only in English language by 1900 and thousands in other languages.

As Patrick Taylor says, the main characteristics of a dystopian novel are: propaganda used for control of society, restriction of free thinking, nominal boss or concept is idolized by the society, people are under permanent control, they have fear to the outer world, everything that is natural is rejected, the society lives in disguise of illusion of utopian country.

Besides these characteristics, dystopian novels mostly have specific previous history, character-protagonist, climax and denouement.

Contemporary Canadian author, Margaret Atwood, whose novels are analyzed by us as an example of dystopian genre, has played an important role in the development of the genre and has made it more diverse. She depicts the leader in a role of god-figure as well as religious rituals that have specific function. She has also brought a novelty in dystopian genre – Christian government. “Handmaid’s Tale” is the only dystopian novel that represents society ruled by the Christian authority. Names, prayers, Christian rituals are similar to the Bible.

The country uses a biblical language in everyday speech. For instance, common greeting for handmaids are the phrases: „Blessed be the fruit”, “May the Lord open”, police officers in Gilead are called “Guardians of the faith” and even shops have names inspired by the Bible: “Lilies of the field”, “Milk and honey” “all flesh”. Military forces have names like “The angels of the apocalypse, Fourth division”, “The twenty-first battalion of the angels of light”. Names copied invariably from the Bible cannot be found in any other dystopian novels except Atwood’s “Handmaid’s Tale”.

On the one hand, Margaret Atwood considers religious fanaticism as the greatest threat for the future society. She represents the danger of religion under the control of politicians. As the author says, “Handmaid’s Tale” is a protest against religion that is a disguise of the authority and powerful tool used for controlling of the mass.

Another extreme is the novel “Oryx and Crake”, where the society is godless and anyone can pretend to be a god. In this novel, scientists play the role of god-figures as they are able to create anything in their laboratories: human beings, animals, plants.

These two extremes create concept of dystopia in Margaret Atwood’s works.

From the political point of view, Margaret Atwood’s novels follow the same path as her predecessors. Totalitarian government rules the society and is nourished by anti-intellectualism, since unintelligent people are much easier to control.

Apart from following the heritage of the utopian-dystopian genre, Atwood brings novelties to dystopian novels from the political point of view. She highlights the conditions of women oppressed by men’s authority.

Finally, it can be concluded that Margaret Atwood has brought new themes to the dystopian novel and gave a new direction to the development of the genre.

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